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AUTHOR Schwartz, Joan
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ABSTRACT

Conversations between adult students of English as a second language were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in order to establish principles of extralinguistic conversational repair technique among second language learners. A variety of gestural and kinesic features were discovered: these are described in detail and their use is contextualized with examples from the conversations. (JB)

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Extralinguistic Features in Conversational Repairs of Adult Second Language Learners

Joan Schwartz
U.C.L.A.

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Observations about how errors and trouble sources are dealt with in conversations between native speakers of English have been reported by sociologists Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977). The research to be reported here, however, focuses on how errors and trouble sources are dealt with in conversations between second language learners of English.

Second language learners of English do not always receive all of their input from native speakers of the target language, even in the target language community. Many second language learners in the United States rarely speak English with native speakers of English. Rather, many learners use English as a "lingua franca" with other non-native speakers of English at work, in their neighborhoods, and in their E.S.L. classrooms. Much of the input to the learner comes from other second language learners and this input should be considered in second language acquisition studies.

At the core of interactions between second language learners is the problem of understanding. This problem is two-sided in any dyadic conversation; both the speaker and the auditor in their interchangeable roles must be able to comprehend if the interaction is successful. It would be useful to look at second language learners' conversations to see what kind of strategies are used to accomplish understanding.

A strategy which is built into the organization of conversation for achieving understanding is a feature called repair. Repair encompasses the concept of "correction"; that is, the replacement of one item with another. But in a larger sense, repair is a "self-righting mechanism" (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977) which deals with all sorts of problems in the interaction. Repair may be initiated by the speaker of a trouble source ("self-initiated repair") or by the other person ("other-initiated repair"). The problem can then be repaired by the speaker of the trouble source ("self-repair") or by the other person ("other-repair").

As well as repairs, it appears that the nonverbal cues, the extralinguistic features of conversation, are very important parts of interaction. Goodwin (undated mimeo) takes the view that "sentences in natural conversation emerge as the products of a process of interaction..." that includes extralinguistic features, especially eye gaze. These extralinguistic features can override syntactic plans, and can even change the syntax of a turn immensely.

There have been many studies on the relationship between

gestures and speech. Most of the studies have been concerned with how body movement expresses aspects of what the speaker is saying, or with how body movement expresses unconscious thoughts. However, Kendon (1972) in particular has concerned himself more with the organization of speech and body movement. He has observed that each speech unit is distinguished by a rhythmic pattern and corresponding body-part involvement, which he refers to as "speech-accompanying movement". To signal the intention to talk there is a change in position for one or more body parts, which is called the "speech-preparatory movement". Kendon states that gestures seem to have to do more with attention-getting and forewarning recipients, in order to assist in regulating turns, than in transmitting details of what is being said.

In communication there are generally so many obstacles to understanding, especially for second language learners, that any resource which is available to the participants is invaluable for assistance. When such an important resource as nonverbal behavior is eliminated, second language learners must rely totally on their imperfect verbal resources. This might explain the problem of most second language learners in using a telephone in the second language, where one cannot see what the other person is doing.

Intuitively it would seem that beginning learners rely heavily on gestures and verbal behavior to communicate. Everyone is familiar with the caricature of second language learners frantically miming elaborate gestures to communicate.

The research to be reported here concentrates on the following questions:

1) What kind of extralinguistic features accompany the repairs of second language learners?
2) Do the gestures which accompany self-initiated repair differ from those used during repairs initiated by the other person? and
3) Do second language learners merely use "iconic gestures" (gestures which mime words), or do they also use gestures as part of the organization of interaction; that is, as signals for approaching speaker change, speech onset, etc.?

Data Collection:

My major concern in this research was to describe characteristics observed in actual conversation. With this in mind, I recorded by both audio- and videotape three fifteen-minute conversations between two friends, both non-native speakers of English. I selected people with varying levels of English proficiency in an attempt to make my observations as rich in variation as possible.

The university students include two friends from E.S.L. 832, the most beginning class offered at U.C.L.A.; Hamid, a

Persian man, and Mari, a Japanese woman. The two friends from the intermediate class are Teresa, a Mexican woman, and Farokh, a man from Iran. The advanced E.S.L. students are Natasha, a Russian woman, and Ming, a woman from Taiwan. I asked permission of each pair of friends to film them while they were conversing during their class breaks. I left them alone in a room with the videocamera running and told them I would return in twenty minutes.

After collecting the videotapes and audio recordings of the conversations, I transcribed the audio recordings according to conversational analysis transcription techniques developed by Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks. The transcription of the visual behavior of the speakers was more difficult, because as yet there is no universal transcription method. After locating the repair segments in my transcripts of the audio data, I transcribed these segments once again from the videotapes, using a system of detailed glosses. Although I tried to be as accurate as possible in affixing each gesture with the corresponding speech, the system I developed for the purposes of this study is inadequate for anything beyond the most basic observations.

Observations:

After examining the data, three aspects of repair emerged which were especially interesting. These are:

1) self-initiated repair
2) a subcategory of self-repair termed "word search", and
3) other-initiated repair.

The observations which follow are offered not as an in-depth analysis of repair, but as an initial description of some of the interactions which took place.

Self-Initiated Repair:

Self-initiated repair occured frequently in the speech of all the learners. Self-initiated repair refers to repair in which the speaker of a trouble source is also the one to initiate repair, and then usually to repair the problem, e.g.,

1) (Hamid and Mari, p. 8)
Hamid: .h that uh i- i- that was a (1.2) uhh it has uhh a bar.

The repair may occur in the same turn as the trouble source or it may occur in a later turn. In most cases in my data, self-repair occured in the same turn as the trouble source. The repair may be immediate, e.g.,

2) (Hamid and Mari, p. 3)
Hamid: Uh you uh could you uhhh see uhhh <u>all</u> the places?

or the repair may be delayed, e.g.,

3) (Natasha and Ming, p. 4)
Ming: But the test will be on that, too. I mean (.2)
today's quiz.

Self-initiated repair was marked by both linguistic and extralinguistic means. To mark self-initiated repair, the second language learners would often pause, say "uh", turn their eye gaze away from the auditor and look either up or down, frown with eyebrows pulled together and/or flutter their eyelids, e.g.,

4) (Hamid and Mari, p. 2)
Mari: My friend is a (.) mm (.) s'student now.
looks away, eyelids flutter
She go to uh Souther Carifornia (.2) uh
(1.) uh:

Broken eye gaze signalled a breakdown in the interaction, and seemed to serve both as a physical sign of emotional distress when the speaker was having trouble, and as a warning to the auditor that repair would take place.

In addition to eye gaze during "uh's", hand movement also frequently changed. The speakers would usually suspend all other "speech-accompanying gestures" by stopping a hand gesture in midstream at the start of the self-repair, e.g.,

5) (Natasha and Ming, p. 3)
Natasha: ... home by ourself [and (didn't work)] hands
Ming: [you mean he] just go
moving in rhythm stops hand movement
over what's happening last (.)
hand moves again
last lecture?

Sometimes, however, turning away of the eye gaze would be accompanied by rotating the hand back and forth at the wrist until the repair was made. At the point of repair the speakers would return their eye gaze to the auditor and continue to gesture as before the pause, e.g.,

6) (Teresa and Farokh, p. 3)
Teresa: eye gaze directed at F. looks up
y'know (.6) and dey was comin uh (.6) about
hand rotating returns gaze
two minutes (.6) each- each- uh between each
to F.
one.

The beginning E.S.L. student, Hamid, also often used hand movement during the repair segments of his turn, which clearly show his frustration at having trouble slowing down what he had to say, e.g.,

7) (Hamid and Mari, p. 6)
Hamid: |gestures from lft. to rt. with arm
Uh |you could you
|in big circles from shoulder |continues first gesture
|uhhh see uhhh |all the places?

An exception to this pattern was found in the data of Natasha, the advanced learner. Frequently Natasha's self-repairs were made without pausing and saying "uh". She seemed so concerned with saying as much as she could as fast as she could, that she said the first word that came to mind, changed it and continued, many times not even completing a turn unit before advancing to the next. She rarely marked her repair with extralinguistic features such as shifting her eye gaze or stopping a gesture in midstream. She continued her visual behavior as if everything were running smoothly linguistically, e.g.,

8) (Natasha and Ming, p. 5)
Natasha: |eye gaze directly at M., hands down scratching
Yeah |dictations always worries me and course I
|her leg...
|m- mixed up myself (.2) I got back- I got slowed
and uh Joan was reading (.4) and I lost- you
know (.6) I lost my idear.

For the other students it appears that self-repair in these conversations is usually marked by a pause and/or saying "uh", accompanied by a halt to all normal so-called "speech-accompanying movements", eye gaze turned away from the auditor, and perhaps hand movement.

Word Search:

Under the category of self-initiated repair is the phenomenon of word search, in which a word is not available when "due". For first language speakers, word search emerges most often as the search for a person's name, e.g.,

9) (Daden, 1975, p.87)
Native speaker: Yesterday I ran into uhh (.5) what's his name (.5) Carl.

On the contrary to this, the word searches in the conversations between the second language learners involved a frequent search for all kinds of vocabulary items; vocabulary seemed to be a common trouble source. This is to be expected for second language learners, since it takes a long time to learn such varied vocabulary

to equip them for all situations. Word search occured most often in the speech of Mari, a beginning student, who had to search for common vocabulary items, and also in the conversation of the advanced learners, Natasha and Ming, who chose to talk about complex technical subjects with specialized terminology.

Almost all of the word searches in the data involved a complicated series of behavior, which progressed until the word was "found", or until the idea was expressed adequately and the search was dropped. Mari, particularly, used a wide variety of strategies, e.g.,

10) (Hamid and Mari, p.5)

Mari: ... for junior high school? or adults because that's
uh many kind | claps hands of | looks up, flutters eyelids, uhh (1.) mmmmm
purses lips | closes eyes, grits teeth (1.5) um | opens hands, looks example Jet Corso?
at H | looks away, hands in lap and uh mmmm | hands up, looks back at H Water Shoot? very, very
mmmm | closes eyes, finger movement (1.) veery

Hamid: inter[esting]
Mari: [yeah] interesting and | fingers in circle huh huh huh
| iconic gestures
Jet Corso is uh very fast

Hamid: Yeah like merry-go-round
Mari: Not- not merry-go-round because (.2) | gestures over we are- we are
| shoulder
(.2) opposite.

Mari and Hamid are talking about an amusement park, and Mari seemed to be searching for the word "ferris wheel". She first clapped her hands together, then said "uh", then she pursed her lips, while she looked up and fluttered her eyelids. Then she said "um", closed her eyes, gritted her teeth, and then she even provided an example, marking it by the word "example-" while opening her hands wide and looking at Hamid, asking "Jet Corso?". All of this activity put the burden on Hamid to provide the word. When he did not supply the word, she tried even more strategies; she again looked away and said "uh", then she looked back at Hamid and provided yet another example by asking "Water Shoot?". She tried to elaborate by saying "very very mmmm" and closed her eyes while her fingers drummed the air. Finally Hamid responded and offered "interesting" as the word. She politely rejected this by saying "yeah interesting" and giggling while she gestured with her hand in a circle to give him an iconic clue. Hamid again offered something, "yeah like merry-go-round", which she rejected by saying, "not- not merry-go-round, we are opposite" and gestured over her shoulder. Then she either finally gave up or she decided that Hamid had understood without the word.

In other cases of word search there was also much

explanation and many times the speaker actually asked the auditor for the word directly, e.g.,

11) (Natasha and Ming, p. 12)

Natasha: ...foundation an and you know some metals and you- you study their (1.) .hh uh their- what
N's hands opposite one another
——→ (.) how do you say? y'know when they react (.2)
pouring gestures
how they react to [different substances]
Ming: [I don't know]

Natasha used many gestures. In this case she used pouring gestures and she used both hands to show one substance opposite the other and coming together. She went on to explain further, all the time gesturing back and forth to show the reaction to which she was referring, but the word she was looking for apparently never emerged.

Extralinguistic features usually served to help the auditor join in the search to find the word for the speaker. The importance of these features is illustrated when the negotiation was not successful, because there was no match-up between the verbal and visual behavior. The attempt to overtly confer with the auditor by asking "how do you say?", as in example 11, was not always responded to, unless accompanied by appropriate extralinguistic features, e.g.,

12) (Teresa and Farokh, p. 20)

Teresa: They have economics and (.2) th- the uh th' major
head turns away
(.8) the uh uhhh let's see (.8) how do you call?
(3.2)
eye gaze returns to F
Teresa: emphasis (.) in the development
nods
Farokh: emphasis

In this case, when Teresa asked "how do you call?" she turned her head away from Farokh and moved her eyes up and down. She did not return her gaze to Farokh until she found the word "emphasis" after an extremely long pause. She found the word herself before she "gave up" and asked the auditor to help her. That is, she verbally asked Farokh to help her by saying "how do you call". But the strength of eye contact overrode her verbal negotiation. Unless the speaker also directs his eye gaze to the auditor, the verbal question remains just a type of thinking out loud.

It seemed from the data that word search involved much extralinguistic behavior to mark the problem. This behavior includes eye gaze movement away from the auditor, eyelid fluttering, lip movement, and hand movement. In trying to explain to the auditor in order to help the auditor provide the word, the speakers used a large array of iconic gestures.

Other-Initiated Repair:

The third type of repair which emerged as an interesting area is other-initiated repair. In these repairs the auditor usually has a hearing or understanding problem and must initiate a repair sequence. In most cases of native speaker interaction, the person who uttered the trouble source will then correct it himself (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977). There are many trouble spots in understanding in second language learners' conversations, as evidenced in the frequent self- repairs. It is in other-initiated repair that extralinguistic features seemed to have much significance.

When the auditor wishes to initiate repair, he must somehow indicate that he is not going to proceed with the expected business. This is because repair draws attention away from the "normal" course of an interaction. To signal the intention to talk, speakers have available various "speech-preparatory" actions (Kendon, 1972). These include changes from a stationary position; there can be a posture shift, the hands start raising, the expression becomes animate and the lips part with an inbreath. The repair sequences in this data were often signalled by a change in posture and an expression of confusion along with the verbal repair, e.g.,

13) (Teresa and Farokh, p. 18)
Teresa: So um (.2) do I speak (.2) quite fast?
→ | head forward, eyebrows up
Farokh: | You?
Teresa: Yeah

14) (Hamid and Mari, p. 6)
Hamid: How did you spend there?
→ | leans forward, questioning look, hand moves up
Mari: | Hmm?
Hamid: How long did you spend there?
Mari: About (.) five (.) hours in- in spending (.4) spend at Magic Mountain.
Hamid: About five hours?
Mari: Yes [uh]
→ | hand sweep, eyebrows together
Hamid: [uh] uh from | uh morning to: afternoon you mean?
Mari: yes.

Sometimes such "speech-preparatory" gestures on the part of the auditor were ignored by Natasha, who sped up what she was saying, although this increased rate of speed may itself constitute an acknowledgement. Ming gave Natasha a chance to initiate repair and repair her own speech by not interrupting her, but by waiting until the end of another turn unit, e.g.,

15) (Natasha and Ming, p. 5)
| M's hands open on lap...
Natasha: | Yeah, so I had to take the book from my hands

Natasha: ...d (.) I went to bed about eleven | M's lips open (.6) so I was
she moves hands into clasp
sitting all the time and [looking the s-
M tilts head
.hh s' so] (.2)

→ Ming:
left hand raised | hand goes down
Y' mean you study up till (.4) | you got home
stops | iconic gesture, sweep of hand
all the way through till eleven?

There are, however, many occurences of extralinguistic features, or a lack thereof, which substitute for speech in initiating repair. In the following case, Farokh's use of gestures initiated repair.

16) (Teresa and Farokh, p. 6)
Teresa: Let's make some- um (1.2) we never have talked about our class, that's true.
→ (1.2) Farokh moves his head in a slight jerking motion, then tilts his head and leans his body forward, all the while gazing directly at Teresa.
Teresa: We never have talked about our class?
nods
Farokh: Ah, yeah.

Teresa responded to Farokh's body posture and head tilt as if he had verbally initiated repair by asking "what?". Teresa then marked her repair with questioning intonation. When Farokh responded by nodding and saying "ah, yeah", Teresa continued. Extralinguistic features are also important in response to questioning intonation. Questioning intonation requires a response from the auditor, just as any question, showing that he understands and "normal business" can be resumed. In this way, it can sometimes signal the end of a repair sequence. The response can be as simple as a nod, "uh hunh", "mm hmm", or "yeah", signalling agreement and understanding, e.g.,

17) (Natasha and Ming, p. 11)
Natasha: It's completely different because that's (.) like do you remember yesterday kinetic energy?
→ (.2) M nods
Natasha: potential energy?
nods
→ Ming: um hmm
Natasha: and Newton's laws.

On the other hand, a lack of extralinguistic reaction also initiated repair, e.g.,

18) (Teresa and Farokh, p. 1)

Farokh: You are start or me?

Teresa: |head forward, eyebrows raised
I'm what?

(.4)

Farokh: start

——→ (.4) Teresa completely stationary, no expression change.

Farokh: |F gestures with hand, tapping out beats
I- I- I'll start

Teresa: |smiles and nods
you can start

Teresa's total non-response to Farokh's repair initiated in itself another repair. Until Teresa signalled that she understood, Farokh could not return to the sequence which was in progress before the repair was initiated. Since Teresa did not indicate that she understood, Farokh made another attempt at a repair, which was then accepted, indicated verbally and extralinguistically.

Conclusion:

In summary, the data on extralinguistic features in the conversational repairs of second language learners show that posture change, facial expression, eye gaze, arm and hand movement, and head movement are all features which signal and accompany verbal repairs. The nonverbal behavior during self-initiated repair included a shift of eye gaze away from the auditor at the start of saying "uh", and sometimes hand rotation. During word search a much larger array of movements was used by the speaker, including movement of eye gaze away and up or down from the auditor, eyelid fluttering, lip pressing, hand rotation, posture changes, and iconic gestures. For repair initiation by the other speaker, extralinguistic features seemed to play an important role. They were used as attention-getting devices and as a means of showing confusion. The extralinguistic features included leaning forward, head tilting, eyebrow movement, finger pointing and lip parting. Visual behavior may also substitute for verbal behavior when an auditor initiates repair, implementing such means as leaning forward, head tilting, and frowning with the eyebrows. The lack of visual behavior may also initiate repair, so that the speaker will continue to repair, until receiving some sign, verbal or nonverbal, of understanding.

To return to the original questions, it would seem:

1) that there is a wide variety of extralinguistic features which accompany the repair sequences of second language learners, as described above,
2) that gestures do differ when accompanying self-initiated repair from when accompanying other-initiated repair, and
3) that second language learners by no means merely use iconic gestures, but also use gestures in regulating the organization of turn-taking, such as speaker change and speech onset.

The data indicate that adult second language learners of English are able to deal with errors and trouble sources in their conversations with one another, using both linguistic and extralinguistic resources.

Transcription Key:

(1.5)	pauses in tenths of seconds
.h	inbreath
each-	cut off speech, usually self-interrupted
Yes [uh uh]	overlapping speech
(important)	transcriber unsure of transcription
|raises hand ——→	extralinguistic features onset point
|I want to... ——→	transcribed speech

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